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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INFO : ADEN, AMMAN, ANKARA, BAGHDAD, BEIRUT, BONN FOR CINCUSAFE, CAIRO, DAMASCUS, FRANKFURT FOR KINDSEY AIR STATION, ATTN: DSC INTELLIGENCE IDCA, HEADQUARTERS USAREUR, HEIDELBERG, KARACHI, KHARTOUM, KUWAIT, LONDON, RABAT, TAIZ, TEHRAN, TEL AVIV, POLAD CINCSTRIKE/CINCMEAFSA, COMIDEASTFOR, DIA

FROM : Amembassy JIDDA

DATE: September 14, 1965

SUBJECT: Monthly Review for Saudi Arabia - August, 1965

REF :

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

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SUMMARY

August will be remembered as a critical month in Saudi diplomatic history.

Saudi-UAR efforts to end the conflict in Yemen, culminating in Nasir's dramatic meeting with Faysal and signature of the Jidda Agreement, dominated the political scene during the past month. During early August,

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Contents and Classification Approved by:

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an ominous UAR military buildup in northern Yemen and almost daily UAR overflights of Saudi Arabia's southern provinces aroused concerns about a possible resumption of UAR bombing raids on Saudi Arabia. On August 11 the Saudis appealed to the US and to the UK to send naval units to the Red Sea and to station fighter aircraft in the Kingdom to deter possible UAR attacks.

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The August 4 statement by the Department's spokesman reaffirming U.S. support for Saudi Arabia's integrity was played in relatively low key by the Saudi media although Saudi officials privately expressed their pleasure with the statement (see Section III below).

On August 9, however, an undetermined number of UAR tanks allegedly penetrated one-half kilometer into Saudi territory and the next day the UAR observers pulled out of the last joint UAR-Saudi cease-fire observation post at Abs in the Yemen. On August 11 Minister of Defense and Aviation Prince SULTAN bin Abd al-Aziz told the Charge that, in view of these incidents and Saudi discovery of an alleged "secret UAR plan" to bomb Taif, al-Kharj, Jizan, Nejran, and Abha, he had now instructed Saudi military forces along the Yemen border to open fire immediately on any UAR or YAR units crossing the frontier. Expressing concern that these and other indicators pointed to an imminent UAR attack on Saudi Arabia, Sultan appealed for U.S. and UK military assistance (see Section III below).

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A Saudi-Iranian survey to determine the median line in the Persian Gulf has ~~been~~ agreed to in principle and a U.S. offer to assist has been accepted by Saudi Arabia (see Section III). 1

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III. U.S.-SAUDI RELATIONS

With tensions rising along the Saudi-Yemen border during early August, the U.S. sought to find some means of alleviating the threat of an open conflict between Saudi Arabia and the UAR. In conversations with Saudi Foreign Ministry officials, [redacted] July 31 and August 1, Charge Seelye urged that Saudi Arabia halt its aid to the Yemeni Royalists and so inform the UAR so as to eliminate any justification for the UAR threat to Jizan and Nejran. [redacted]

The Saudis were reluctant, however, to accept a U.S. suggestion that they submit a written complaint about UAR overflights to the President of the Security Council to balance the complaint against

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BI(A)(5) Saudi Arabia that the YAR had presented in late July. [] pointed out that Saudi Arabia wished to avoid a public exchange of recriminations with the UAR at a time when negotiations were still in progress.

BI(A)(5) A Departmental spokesman August 4 responded to press queries about the Saudi-UAR confrontation by stating that the U.S. Government strongly hoped the Saudi-UAR talks then going on would lead to a situation where the Yemenis themselves would be able to decide their own destiny free from any outside interference. The spokesman also reaffirmed U.S. support for the maintenance of Saudi Arabia's integrity and stated that the U.S. remains strongly opposed to the use of force or the threat of force in the Near East. The statement was not given particularly prominent play in the Saudi press whose editorial comment tended to emphasize almost exclusively our endorsement of Yemeni self-determination, noting that this was a vindication of Faysal's own Yemen policy. The statement was, however, well received by Saudi officials. Lest they misinterpret the statement as unqualified U.S. backing for Saudi Arabia, the Charge took care to reiterate to key Saudi officials that Saudi Arabia must stop allowing Yemeni Royalists to use bases on Saudi soil.

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The CORRY remained in Jidda through the Nasir visit, being released on August 24 by the USS FOX. The presence of a U.S. warship in Jidda Harbor was appreciated by the Saudis and did not go unnoticed by the Egyptians. Following conclusion of the Jidda Agreement, the U.S. informed the Saudi Government that destroyer visits to Jidda would henceforth return to their normal schedule.

The U.S. Department of Defense Evaluation Team which had arrived in the Kingdom in late July completed its review with Saudi military and air force personnel of various air defense proposals made to Saudi Arabia by competing U.S. aircraft manufacturers. On August 10 the team presented its conclusions to Minister of Defense and Aviation Prince Sultan in Taif. In the course of the briefing session, Sultan informed the team that he had determined to purchase the Lockheed package of three squadrons of F-104G aircraft, with related ground environment equipment and ten batteries of HAWK anti-aircraft missiles.

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This decision by Sultan requires approval by the King and Council of Ministers before it becomes effective. Such approval will permit the Saudis to move forward at long last in the implementation of the Air Defense Program drawn up by a U.S. survey team in late 1963.

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Although it will be a considerable time before the Saudis have the capabilities to operate and maintain a MACH 2 aircraft like the F-104G and the highly complicated electronics gear associated with it, conclusion of the sales agreement will be an important first step in enabling the Saudis to develop their own air defense system.

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U.S.-Saudi relations continued to be strengthened in other areas by virtual completion of the interim television broadcasting facilities in Jidda and Riyadh and by the expeditious action taken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to implement the recently signed Military Construction Agreement. In late August Colonels WALKER and MCBRIDE of the Corps' Mediterranean Division presented to Prince Sultan the Corps' recommendations for architect-engineering firms to undertake the design of the proposed cantonments in Tabuk and Khamis Mushayt.

On August 3 Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Ahmad Zaki YAMANI formally requested a further three-year extension of the services of the U.S. Geological Survey team now in Saudi Arabia once the present agreement expires in September, 1966. This request has been forwarded to Washington together with the Embassy's strong recommendation for extension. With no AID technical assistance program in Saudi Arabia, the USGS contract is the principal demonstration of U.S. Government interest in Saudi economic development in the non-military sphere.

Following a meeting in Dhahran on August 30 between Embassy, Aramco, Department of Defense, and Saudi Government officials, the U.S. formally offered, and the Saudi Arabian Government accepted, a proposal for a survey of the median line in the Persian Gulf to be conducted by Department of Defense personnel. Providing approval of this agreement is obtained from the Iranian Government in time, work on the survey will begin in mid-September.

Saudi press treatment of such issues as Vietnam continued to be reasonably well balanced and objective with one major exception. At the end of August the daily al-Bilad carried two savage editorials on the subject of the Los Angeles riots, portraying white Americans as "bestial butchers" perpetrating unspeakable atrocities on innocent Negroes. Efforts by the Public Affairs Officer to ascertain the identity of the author of these articles were unsuccessful but his representations with the Acting Editor of al-Bilad may have had some beneficial effect since no further such articles have appeared. The Gemini 5 flight received considerable attention but almost no editorial comment.

For the Charge d'Affaires, a.i.:

Richard W. Murphy
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Second Secretary of Embassy

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